

get ex-combatants into schools and jobs. After more than a decade of conflict, this is vitally important.

Now, Liberians in every part of the country are turning to President Sirleaf's government for things like clean water, electricity, health care, roads, and jobs. These are enormous challenges for the Government of Liberia, but they are also opportunities. They are opportunities to educate, to employ, to strengthen the rule of law, and to consolidate the peace. These opportunities are the bedrock of Liberia's great hope.

We have an opportunity also. It is an opportunity to partner with more than 3 million people as they rebuild their country from conflict, using the bricks and glue of peace. And it is an opportunity to demonstrate to all the people of West Africa—and the world—that greater riches flow from peace than from any form of violence.

In the last 2 fiscal years, Congress has appropriated almost \$900 million to reconstruction efforts in Liberia. Many Americans have participated personally in this noble work, through USAID, other government agencies, and many NGOs.

We must continue these efforts. President Sirleaf and the people of Liberia have embraced democracy and peace. We must embrace them as our friends.

NATIONAL SAFE PLACE WEEK

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I would like to publicly discuss the importance of the Project Safe Place Program and extend my support for designating the week of March 13, 2006, as "National Safe Place Week."

Project Safe Place is a nationally acclaimed youth outreach and education program that provides immediate help and support to youth who are in crisis or at risk for abuse, neglect, or serious family problems. This easily replicated community initiative, which takes place in more than 700 communities around the country, educates thousands of young people every year about dealing with difficult, threatening situations such as child abuse, substance addiction, crime, and family problems. Qualified agencies, trained volunteers, and community partners such as businesses, local government, and law enforcement agencies, work together to sustain Safe Places where youth in crisis can gain immediate, free, and confidential assistance. Safe Place sites, which are designated by distinctive yellow and black Safe Place signs, include youth-friendly businesses, schools, fire stations, libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and even buses.

S. Res. 390 provides an opportunity to recognize the youth-serving agencies, community partners, counselors, and trained volunteers who work together to sustain safe places for children to turn to. We can show them that they have our support and appreciation and that we value communities actively

working together to help young people in crisis.

Throughout my tenure as a legislator, I have done my best to support initiatives that work to improve child welfare. Our Nation's children are its greatest asset and our most precious treasure. It is vital that we help them get the right start, nurture their development, and provide for their well being. Quality childcare, nutrition programs, children's health initiatives, and overall poverty reduction measures are critical to ensuring that the children have the tools they need to grow up safe, happy, and healthy. Providing services for at-risk youth is particularly essential because these young men and women often do not have the support that would help them through the transition from childhood to adulthood. These services can help young people continue their education, find jobs, and improve family relationships.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate to join me in supporting this resolution. This resolution will affirm the work of those individuals and organizations sustaining Safe Places around the country and encourage them to continue making a difference in the lives of at-risk youth.

MICHAEL BERMAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, my dear friend of over 30 years, Michael Berman, has just written his memoir, "Living Large: A Big Man's Ideas on Weight, Success and Acceptance." Mike possesses one of the most astute political minds along with a generous heart and kind soul. I am proud of his courage in writing about his struggle with weight control and hope his book will encourage others to honestly confront and overcome their weight challenges.

This week, both The Washington Post and Roll Call reviewed Mike's book. I ask unanimous consent that those articles be printed at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Roll Call, Mar. 14, 2006]

WEIGHING IN ON WEIGHT

(By Elizabeth Brotherton, Roll Call Staff)

Michael Berman is kind of a big deal.

Now president of the lobbying firm the Duberstein Group Inc., Berman has worked on every Democratic presidential campaign since 1964. He was even deputy chief of staff to former Vice President Walter Mondale.

That's on top of all the nonprofit boards he sits on.

But to Berman, there has been one lingering thing that has followed him all those years: his weight.

See, Michael Berman is kind of a big deal. "Food," Berman said. "It's like a drug."

Berman's lifelong struggle with food is chronicled in his new book, "Living Large: A Big Man's Ideas on Weight, Success, and Acceptance," set to hit bookstores Wednesday.

Berman said he wrote the book primarily because in all his years of reading weight loss books, he rarely found one about over-

weight men. Even more rare was trying to find a book written by an overweight man.

So he decided to provide that voice.

"I'm hoping that some people will come to understand more of what fat people go through," Berman said.

Berman said the book, which he co-authored with writer Laurence Shames, took seven years to complete.

"It really became kind of a vehicle to help me," Berman said of the book. "It kind of helped me stay on path with my weight management."

Berman, who has struggled with food since he was a child, has always been conscious of his weight. He has tried every diet imaginable, he said, from South Beach and Atkins to even undergoing two hospitalized starvation diets. He once hallucinated cheeseburgers.

But whenever he managed to get his weight under control, it would shoot back up again.

The 66-year-old tipped the scales at 317 pounds in January 1999. (He now weights 240 pounds, he said.)

"I really have the view, for really fat people like myself there's a significant psychological component as to why we are fat," Berman said. "There's some issues, some of which kind of get revealed in the book."

"Living Large" reads a lot like a biography. Berman talks about his childhood, meeting his wife and his career in politics.

He also includes first-hand views from his wife, Carol, on how his heavy stature has affected their marriage.

"One day, I said to her, 'Why don't you write a chapter called: 'Living with a fat man: A Spouse's Perspective' he said. 'I just came to realize that I had an enormous effect on her.'"

Only parts of his wife's chapter made it into the book (the entire section is available on Berman's Web site, www.mikelivinglarge.com). But Berman also manages to touch on some serious issues.

For example: Why did he gain weight at certain times? How has his weight affected his life and the lives of those around him?

Plus, he deals with the issues behind his significant weight, issues he has kept secret for quite some time.

"I feel like, OK. I've shared this stuff with the psychologist I had all these years, and I'm really comfortable with myself," Berman said. "I just became more and more comfortable."

The book's release comes at a time when the United States appears to be losing the war against obesity.

About 119 million adults in the United States—64.5 percent of the adult population—are either overweight or obese, according to the nonprofit group Trust for America's Health.

Obesity has been linked to a slew of serious health problems, from diabetes and heart disease to strokes and some cancers, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

That means the issue will be relevant—and political—for quite some time, Berman said.

"It's going to kind of be an issue of, 'Are we going to apply resources to beginning education campaigns to show young people that we are going to do something about it?'" he said. "I think it's increasingly going to be a political issue. But it is going to be a resource issue."

Berman said that he now has created a manageable situation for controlling his weight. He monitors his daily calorie intake in a meticulous journal, and he regularly gets on the scale.

"I'm never going to be a thin person," Berman said. "But, by golly, maybe I can keep (my weight) in a somewhat healthy range."